

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EPAE-00 ACDA-12 CEQ-01 CIAE-00
DOTE-00 HEW-06 HUD-02 INR-10 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 NSF-02 OIC-02 PA-02 PM-05 SOE-02 DOE-11
OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 USIA-15 /120 W
-----009954 161831Z /46

R 161732Z MAR 78

FM USMISSION USNATO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0056

INFO ALL NATO CAPITALS

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BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC

PARIS ALSO FOR USOECD

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: CCMS, NATO

SUBJECT: CCMS SPRING PLENARY: ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON
"PROBLEMS OF INNER CITY AREAS"

1. SUMMARY: ALLIED DELEGATIONS TO THE CCMS PLENARY AT BRUSSELS, MARCH 14-15, ENGAGED IN A SPIRITED AND HIGHLY USEFUL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES REGARDING THE MAINTENANCE OF A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE IN INNER CITY AREAS. DISCUSSION PAPERS ON THIS SUBJECT HAD BEEN EXCHANGED BY A NUMBER OF MEMBER COUNTRIES IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING AND MOST DELEGATIONS INCLUDED LEADING EXPERTS IN URBAN AFFAIRS. FOLLOWING BRIEF, PREPARED SUMMARY REMARKS BY EACH DELEGATION, THE ENTIRE FIRST DAY OF THE PLENARY MEETING WAS GIVEN OVER TO A FREE-WHEELING SPONTANEOUS DISCUSSION OF VARIOUS INNER CITY TRENDS AND PROBLEMS AND THE POTENTIAL FOR ENHANCEMENT OF LIFE IN URBAN AREAS. WHILE NO GENERALIZED OVERALL CONCLUSIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE OR ATTEMPTED, THERE WAS WIDE AGREEMENT THAT THE EXCHANGE WAS VERY BENEFICIAL TO ALLIED NATIONS. END SUMMARY.

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2. SEVERAL THEMES CHARACTERIZED THE DISCUSSION. FIRST, THERE WAS GENERAL RECOGNITION THAT THE PROBLEMS OF INNER CITY AREAS NEED TO BE APPROACHED IN AN INTEGRATED FASHION INVOLVING ALL URBAN FACTORS (E.G. LAND USE PLANNING, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, SOCIAL SERVICES). SECOND, PARTICIPATION BY

INNER CITY RESIDENTS IN THE DECISIONS THAT DIRECTLY AFFECT THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE IS PREREQUISITE TO SUCCESSFUL REVITALIZATION EFFORTS. THIRD, GOVERNMENTS AT ALL LEVELS CANNOT ADEQUATELY ADDRESS AND SOLVE MOST INNER CITY PROBLEMS BY THEMSELVES--PRIVATE SECTOR COOPERATION AND SUPPORT IS VERY IMPORTANT. FOURTH, THE PROBLEMS OF INNER CITIES CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AND SUCCESSFULLY ADDRESSED ONLY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LARGER ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FORCES OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA OR REGION IN WHICH THEY ARE LOCATED. FINALLY, IT WAS REPEATEDLY STRESSED THAT WHILE CERTAIN KINDS OF PROBLEMS AND CIRCUMSTANCES ARE COMMON TO MANY, IF NOT MOST, CITIES, EACH CITY ALSO HAS ITS OWN SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS, POTENTIALS AND OBJECTIVES, WHICH MUST BE RECOGNIZED.

3. MANY QUESTIONS WERE RAISED, HOWEVER, ABOUT THE "COMMON WISDOM" THAT SEEMED TO UNDERLIE SOME OF THE ASSUMPTIONS AND SUPPOSED REMEDIES FOR INNER CITY PROBLEMS. ONE DELEGATE OBSERVED THAT, FOR THE MOST PART, CITIZENS SEEMED TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS ABOUT WHERE TO LIVE FOR REASONS QUITE AS IMPORTANT AS GOVERNMENTS' REASONS FOR WANTING THEM TO LIVE IN THE INNER CITY. UNTIL THAT REALITY IS ACCEPTED AND DEALT WITH, MANY GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS TO "ENGINEER" THE REVITALIZATION OF INNER CITY AREAS ARE PROBABLY DOOMED TO FAILURE.

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4. IN THE AREA OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, US DELEGATE (GARRISON, HUD) NOTED SOME LESSONS LEARNED IN THE US "MODEL CITIES" PROGRAM. OVERLY STRUCTURED AND STANDARDIZED APPROACHES FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN URBAN AFFAIRS PROVED IN EXPERIENCE NOT TO BE APPROPRIATE OR EFFECTIVE IN MANY CITIES. RECENT US PROGRAMS HAVE INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR ADEQUATE FLEXIBILITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN DESIGNING SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION APPROACHES.

5. US DELEGATE (WORTHY, HUD) DESCRIBED SEVERAL EXPERIMENTAL US PROGRAMS, INCLUDING ONE IN WHICH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ALLOWED INDIVIDUALS WILLING TO REHABILITATE URBAN DWELLINGS TO MEET LOCAL HOUSING STANDARDS TO TAKE POSSESSION UPON PAYMENT OF ONE DOLLAR. ONCE RENNOVATION WAS COMPLETE TITLE WAS TRANSFERRED. THIS EXPERIMENT HAD PROVEN SO SUCCESSFUL THAT IT IS NOW A REGULAR HUD PROGRAM.

6. OBSERVATIONS WERE ALSO MADE ABOUT SUCH TOPICS AS VARIOUS COUNTRIES' EXPERIENCE WITH NEW TOWNS AND "NEW TOWNS IN TOWN", THE ROLE OF THE HISTORICAL CITY IN OLDER EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN CITIES, THE MANY AND CHANGING INFLUENCES THAT THE MOTOR VEHICLE HAS ON CITIES, THE ABSOLUTE SHORTAGE OF

LAND IN SOME COUNTRIES AND THE INFLUENCE THAT REALITY HAS ON REVITALIZATION EFFORTS, THE SPECIAL ROLE OF NEIGHBORHOODS IN NOURISHING AND SUSTAINING THE SOCIAL VITALITY OF CITY LIFE, THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SOCIAL SERVICES AND GROWING EMPHASIS ON RENEWAL AND REHABILITATION AND AWAY FROM NEW CONSTRUCTION.

7. THE UK REPRESENTATIVE (FAIRCLOUGH) SUMMED UP THE DISCUSSION BY OBSERVING THAT IN OUR ATTEMPTS TO "REVITALIZE" CITIES WE ARE DEALING WITH FUNDAMENTAL PROCESSES THAT HAVE BEEN EVOLVING OVER CENTURIES OR EVEN MILLENIA. SUCCESS

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DOTE-00 HEW-06 HUD-02 INR-10 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 NSF-02 OIC-02 PA-02 PM-05 SOE-02 DOE-11
OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 USIA-15 /120 W
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R 161732Z MAR 78
FM USMISSION USNATO
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IN REVITALIZATION MIGHT WELL BE MEASURED MORE IN TERMS OF MODIFYING THE EFFECTS OF THESE PROCESSES RATHER THAN OF ATTEMPTING TO ARREST OR REVERSE THEM.

8. COMMENT: ALL DELEGATIONS WELCOMED THE ACTIVE AND FRANK DISCUSSION OF SIGNIFICANT URBAN ISSUES. THE PARTICIPATION OF LARGE NUMBERS OF URBAN EXPERTS CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO THE EFFECTIVENESS AND LIVELINESS OF THE ROUNDTABLE. IN OUR VIEW, THIS SHOULD LEND CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT TO THE SUGGESTION MADE AT THE JANUARY COORDINATORS MEETING THAT BOTH FALL AND SPRING PLENARY ROUNDTABLES BE DEVOTED TO SPECIFIC, RELEVANT DISCUSSIONS OF COMMON ISSUES CONFRONTING ALLIES.
END COMMENT. BENNETT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, VIEW, URBAN AREAS, MEETINGS, REGIONAL DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978USNATO02752
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780117-0918
Format: TEL
From: USNATO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780357/aaaabwpp.tel
Line Count: 165
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 75a917c5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3298766
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CCMS SPRING PLENARY: ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON "PROBLEMS OF INNER CITY AREAS"
TAGS: SOCI, OCON, CCMS, NATO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/75a917c5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014